

School Safety Assessment Technical Memorandum

# Searles Elementary School

33629 15 St, Union City, CA 94587

New Haven Unified School District

September 2022



The Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools Program is a program of the Alameda County Transportation Commission (alamedactc.org) and is funded with Alameda County's local sales tax Measure B, regional, state and federal funds.

# Searles Elementary School

A school safety assessment was conducted at Searles Elementary School in Union City during the afternoon dismissal on Thursday, September 15, 2022. The assessment was attended by representatives from the City of Union City, Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools staff, and Searles Elementary School staff and caregivers.

Participants included:

- Trien Tran, Engineer, City of Union City Public Works
- Martha Garcia, Assistant Principal, Searles Elementary School
- Jasmine Law, School Site Coordinator, Alameda SR2S team
- Valerie Haines, engineer, Alameda County SR2S team
- Ben Frazier, planner, Alameda County SR2S team
- Jesús Contreras, planner, Alameda County SR2S team
- One school caregiver

## **School Information**

Location & Enrollment

	Address:	33629 15 <sup>th</sup> St, Union City, CA, 94587		
	Morning Bell(s):	8:00 am		
	Afternoon Bell(s):	2:05 pm (Minimum Day: 12:05 pm)		
	Grade Levels:	ТК- 5		
	Enrollment:	704		
	School Type (neighborhood/ magnet/charter):	Neighborhood		

#### Student Travel Data

Students' Proximity to School	Less than ¼ mile (5-min. walk): 25%	
(school estimate):	Between ¼ and ½ mile (5-10-min. walk): 25%	
	Between ½ and 1 mile (10 to 20-min. walk): 25%	
	Greater than 1 mile (more than 20-min. walk): 25%	

Student Travel Mode Info:	School Estimate:	Recent SR2S Hand Tally Data:	
		Spring 2019	
	Walking: 30%	Walking: 27%	
	Biking: 5%	Biking: 2%	
	School bus: 0%	School bus: 0%	
	Transit: 0%	Transit: 0%	
	Carpool: 5%	Carpool: 11%	
	Family Vehicle: 60%	Family Vehicle: 59%	
	Other: 0%	Other: 1%	

### Bikes, Buses, and Drop-off/Pick-up

Does the school have bike racks? What is the capacity? Is it secure bike parking? On a typical day, what percentage of racks are used?	There is a large bike corral located inside the school campus near the front entrance by the main office. The bike corral can fit 20 bikes. On a typical day, about five students bike to school.
Does the school have special pick-up/drop-off policies/ procedures?	Caregivers who enter the rear parking lot are required to park before their student(s) can walk to their vehicle (escorted by staff). Kinder and 1 <sup>st</sup> Graders are picked up from their classroom by parents/siblings. 2 <sup>nd</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> Graders are released by teachers and proceed to one of 3 exits or after school programs.



Caregivers drive into the curbside pull-in area to pick up their student(s) and then follow the queue to rejoin traffic.

Note: Searles Elementary School is not served by public transit within a quarter mile nor is it served by a school bus.

Street Profiles

Street Name	Width	Lanes	Posted Speed Limit	Traffic Volumes	Notes
Sherman					Curbside pull-in area for school pick-up/drop-off near 15 <sup>th</sup> Street. Rear parking lot entry near Colgate Dr, where caregivers park
Drive	36 feet	2 lanes	25 mph		vehicles to pick up students.
15 <sup>th</sup> Street	36 feet	2 lanes	25 mph		Street fronts the school's main entrance. No parking allowed during school hours.
G Street	36 feet	2 lanes	25 mph		Entry to school parking lot near 15 <sup>th</sup> Street is closed off with a chain during pick-up time. The designated school bus zone is along this street.
Colgate Drive	36 feet	2 lanes	25 mph		Fronted with residential houses on both sides. Street runs behind the school.

Pedestrian- and Bicycle-Involved Collision Summary 2016-2020

The collision summary table shows all bicycle- and pedestrian-involved collisions within one-half mile of the school. These collisions may or may not be school-related travel.

Radius from School	Total Collisions	Fatal Collisions	Severe Injury Collisions	Visible Injury Collisions	Complaint of Pain Collisions	Pedestrian Collisions	Bicycle Collisions
< ¼ mi	2	0	1	0	1	1	1
¼ mi – ½ mi	11	0	1	5	5	7	4
Total	13	0	2	5	6	8	5

Source: UC Berkeley – Transportation Injury Mapping System, Safe Transportation Research and Education Center, University of California, Berkeley, 2021

#### Community Health and Demographics (Data from the census tract of school site)

Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Priced Meals ('20-'21 school year)	MTC Equity Priority Community Designation (2018)	<u>Healthy Places Index</u> <u>Score (2021)</u>	CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Percentile (2021)
46.6%	Not Applicable	83.9 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	48

Sources: California Department of Education, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Public Health Alliance of Southern California, and California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

\*Although the Searles Elementary School is not situated within one of MTC's Equity Priority Communities, some students may come from the next census tract over which is designated as a "high" Equity Priority Community.

## **Existing Conditions**

### Overview

Searles Elementary School is located in a residential neighborhood on the eastern side of Union City, immediately bounded by 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Sherman Drive, G Street, and Colgate Drive. The Alameda Creek Trail, along with a single row of residential houses, separates the school from an industrial area west of campus. To the north of the residential neighborhood are railroad tracks between 11<sup>th</sup> Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Street. To the west and to the south of the residential neighborhood are two major arterial roads – Decoto Road and Alvarado-Niles Road. Additionally, James Logan High School is located nearby, less than half a mile southeast of Searles Elementary School.

Searles Elementary School has three drop-off/pick-up locations: the rear parking lot near the corner of Colgate Drive and Sherman Drive, the curbside pull-in near the corner of Sherman Drive and 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and in front of the school's main office on G Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. At the rear parking lot on the west side of the school, caregivers are required to park their vehicles before their child can begin walking over to the vehicle with a staff escort. For the curbside pull-in, caregivers remain in their vehicles and queue up as they pick-up their student(s); they exit by pulling back onto Sherman Drive. There is a crossing guard at the corner of Sherman Drive and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The pick-up location in front of the main office serves as an "unofficial" pick-up zone. Caregivers and teachers reported seeing caregivers double parked and making 3-point U-turns along G Street.

During pick-up, traffic generally circulated clockwise around the school on Sherman Drive and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. On G Street, traffic came from both directions. Colgate Drive was not as busy as the other streets. Over half the students are driven to and from school. About one-quarter of the students walk to and from school, and on average, only a couple of students bike to school.

Searles Elementary School is located a block away from H Street, which has been identified by the Alameda County Transportation Commission as part of the Countywide Pedestrian High-Injury Network. Decoto Road and Alvarado-Niles Road are identified on both the Countywide Pedestrian and Bicycle High-Injury Networks and are less than half a mile from the school.

### Observations

Participants observed or reported the following conditions during the school safety assessment (SSA).

- 1. Sherman Drive west of 15<sup>th</sup> Street (*Corresponds to #1 on improvement map*)
- The travel path along Sherman Drive follows a 90-degree bend along the west side of the school.
  - $\circ$   $\;$  The street has two travel lanes with parking on both sides of the street.
  - There are no posted parking restrictions.
  - During the observation, drivers appeared to be speeding around the bend.
- There is a curbside pull-in area just west of the Sherman Drive and 15<sup>th</sup> Street intersection. Vehicles form a queue as they wait to enter the pull-in area to pick up their student(s). The school places cones between the travel lane and the pull-in area to discourage vehicles from exiting mid-queue.
  - For the most part, drivers respected the queue and waited to exit at the other end of the pull-in near the intersection.
  - Vehicles were parked on the south side of Sherman Drive, which caused drivers in the queue for the pull-in area to idle in the eastbound travel lane as they waited to enter the curbside pull-in area.
  - Drivers were seen entering the opposite travel lane to go around the double-parked vehicles waiting in the eastbound travel lane.
  - During the observation, a driver waiting in the queue about 20 feet before the curbside pull-in was seen turning out of the queue and U-turning into the opposite travel lane. As this driver was entering the opposite travel lane, another driver was traveling westbound. Fortunately, they were able to avoid a collision.

- Drivers were seen parked in the curbside pull-in and getting out to enter the school and pick up their student(s).
- During the observation, a driver parked on the north side of Sherman Drive backed up into a residential driveway to turn around and head east on Sherman Drive.
- Caregivers and their student(s) crossed mid-block along Sherman Drive.
- During the observation, vehicles were parked in the red curb area on Sherman Drive west of 15<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Vehicles parked in the red curb area obstructed the visibility of the crossing guard and others crossing at this intersection.





Left: Vehicles entering the curbside pull-in on Sherman Drive.

*Right: Dark grey minivan entering the opposite travel lane to go around the vehicles waiting in the eastbound travel lane to enter the curbside pull-in.* 



*Left: Black sedan backing into a private driveway to turn around and travel eastbound on Sherman Drive. Right: White car parked in the red curb area west of Sherman Drive and* 15<sup>th</sup> Street.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Install new: Loading zone with a white curb with adequate signage along the southern side of Sherman Drive to create a designated waiting area for vehicles waiting to enter the curbside pull-in.
- Install new: Speed limit and school signs along Sherman Drive.
- Construct new: Two Speed humps along Sherman Drive<sup>1</sup>.
- 2. Sherman Drive Parking Lot (*Corresponds to #2 on improvement map*)
  - The parking lot is located behind the school off Sherman Drive, north of the Colgate Drive intersection.
  - On the street side, the parking lot is lined with a chain-linked fence with a driveway for vehicles and a narrow (about three feet) opening south of the driveway where students and caregivers walk through. This gate connects to a pathway to the school access point.
  - Drivers are expected to follow a counter-clockwise circulation around the parking lot.
  - Caregivers are expected to park their vehicle in a parking stall before their child is escorted over by a staff member.
    - There is a "No Parking" curbside zone on the eastern edge of the parking lot that fronts the school building. The curb separates the parking lot from landscaping (no sidewalk) (see diagram on following page). This area is used as an unofficial curbside loading area for drivers.
      - While only a handful of drivers use this area, those who do stop along the curb to pick up their student(s) obstruct the traffic flow and block the sightlines for students walking to parked vehicles.
      - Staff will still escort students to this area once a driver has pulled to the curb.
        Students do not wait in the landscaped area.
    - About half of the drivers who use this area preferred to back into their parking spots.
    - Most caregivers were observed parking their vehicle and walking over to meet their student(s) at the school access point.
    - School staff reported that kids mainly wait on the pathway along the south fence near the school access point.
    - At the northeast corner of the parking lot, there is a crosshatched (no parking area) near a gate that connects to the school fields. Sometimes, drivers park in this area, hindering access to and from the field.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 2021 Union City Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Appendix E pg. 49, <u>E Design-Standards-</u> <u>Toolkit FINAL compressed (unioncity.org)</u>



Left: Paved path along the south side of the parking lot leading to the small opening in the chain-linked fence. Right: Small opening in the chain-linked fence ("Ped Gate" on the aerial). Bottom: Aerial view of the parking lot where vehicles enter on the left side and circular counter-clockwise.



Left: Vehicles idling in "No Parking" curb zone inside the school parking lot waiting for their students. Right: Caregivers who parked or walked are waiting by the school entrance to meet their student(s).

#### Recommendations:

- Programmatic: Stop allowing drivers to use the curbside area along the eastern side of the parking lot as a pick-up area. All students should be escorted to parked vehicles in designated stalls. Students should not be escorted to this area. Consider using cones to block off the area to further discourage use as a loading area.
- Programmatic:
  - Short-term: Place cones along the landscaped curbside to prevent drivers from stopping there and obstructing the traffic flow and the sightlines of students walking to parked vehicles.
  - Long-term: Consider installing bollards 5 feet from the curb to deter caregivers from parking there.

- 3. Colgate Drive and Sherman Drive (Corresponds to #3 on improvement map)
  - Colgate Drive meets Sherman Drive at a T-intersection.
    - There are stop signs at all approaches.
    - There's a crosswalk across the northern approach on Sherman Drive and across Colgate Drive.



Above: Aerial view of Sherman Drive and Colgate Drive intersection.

#### Recommendations:

The following infrastructure recommendations are proposed to improve the existing conditions described above:

• Constructing new: Curb extensions on the eastern corners of the Colgate Drive approach to Sherman Drive<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 2021 Union City Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Appendix E pg. 16, <u>E Design-Standards-</u> <u>Toolkit FINAL compressed (unioncity.org)</u>

- 4. G Street from 15<sup>th</sup> Street to Colgate Drive (Corresponds to #3 & #5 on improvement map)
  - G Street has two travel lanes in each direction.
  - Although the school does not currently have a school bus service, there is a school bus loading zone on the west side of G Street marked with a red curb.
    - Drivers were seen idling in the red curb area and some parked to get their student(s).
  - The driveway entrance to the school's parking lot is closed off with a chain.
    - Drivers were seen using the driveway as a parking spot or using it to make 3-point turns.
  - A painted curb extension is at the northeast corner of G Street and Colgate Drive.



*Left: Northeast corner of Colgate Drive and G Street facing west. Right: Northeast corner of Colgate Drive and G Street facing south.* 



Left: School bus loading zone on the west side of G Street. Right: Driveway entrance to the school parking lot on the west side of G Street near 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Recommendations:

- Construct new: Curb extensions at all three crosswalk landings<sup>3</sup>.
- Programmatic: Place cones at the driveway entrance on G Street.
- 5. 15<sup>th</sup> Street from Sherman Drive to G Street (*Corresponds to #5 & #6 on improvement map*)
  - 15<sup>th</sup> Street has two travel lanes in each direction
  - At the intersection of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and G Street, there are two curb extensions on the north and east corners.
  - At the intersection of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Sherman Drive, there is a curb extension on the eastern corner.
  - Along the west side of 15<sup>th</sup> Street, the curb is marked as a student loading zone with signs indicating "No Parking School Days 7am 5pm."
  - There is a crossing guard on the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Sherman Drive.
    - Due to the corner configuration on the school side of the Sherman Drive and 15<sup>th</sup> Street intersection, the crossing guard and students have very little space to stand. School staff and parents reported that the crossing guard was a victim of a hit-and-run during pickup time.
  - Drivers picking up back up along 15<sup>th</sup> Street past G Street.
  - Occasionally, drivers heading north on 15<sup>th</sup> Street make U-turns to head south on 15<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Drivers were parked along the red curbs at block corners.
  - There is a lot of foot traffic at the 15<sup>th</sup> Street and G Street intersection.
    - People walking were seen crossing diagonally (outside of a crosswalk) across the 15<sup>th</sup> Street and G Street intersection.
  - Drivers parked too far off the curb, causing other vehicles to encroach into the opposite travel lane as they maneuvered around them.
  - Drivers parked too close to the crosswalk limiting the visibility of pedestrians crossing.
  - Drivers stopping at the intersection were seen encroaching on both crosswalks at 15<sup>th</sup> Street and G Street as they stopped and proceeded through the intersection.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> 2021 Union City Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Appendix E pg. 16, <u>E Design-Standards-</u> <u>Toolkit FINAL compressed (unioncity.org)</u>



*Left: South corner of Sherman Drive and 15<sup>th</sup> Street, where the crossing guard stands. Right: Student Loading Zone on the west side of 15<sup>th</sup> Street.* 



Left: Curb extension on the northern corners of the 15<sup>th</sup> Street and G Street intersection.

*Right: Corner of* 15<sup>th</sup> *Street and G Street facing northeast.* 

#### **Recommendation:**

- Construct new: Curb extension at the southern block corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Sherman Drive<sup>4</sup>.
- Install new: Cross-hatched markings at existing red curbs to further daylight the intersection.
- Installing new: Install a white curb along the west side of 15<sup>th</sup> Street.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> 2021 Union City Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Appendix E pg. 16, <u>E Design-Standards-</u> <u>Toolkit FINAL compressed (unioncity.org)</u>

- Construct new: Curb extensions at the west and south corners of the 15<sup>th</sup> Street and G Street intersection<sup>5</sup>.
- Install new: Speed limit and School Zone signs along 15<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Construct new: Speed hump along 15<sup>th</sup> Street<sup>6</sup>.
- Programmatic: The school should place cones at the driveway entrance to the school parking lot to prevent vehicles from parking there.

## Participant Comments

School staff and parents who attended the assessment were primarily concerned with the vehicles parking in the school driveways on G Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street and the danger it posed to children walking on the sidewalk. They stated that drivers often leave cars unattended as they go looking for their student(s). Another point of concern was the double parking along Sherman Drive as drivers wait to enter the curbside pull-in area. They also noted that the crossing guard has been a victim of a hit-and-run collision.

From the SR2S Site Assessment Background Survey, it was reported that road safety concerns were more prevalent during the afternoon pick-up time.

It was also noted that the close proximity of James Logan High School created higher traffic volumes during the drop-off and pick-up times.

## Recommendations

### **Engineering Recommendations**

Recommendations to improve infrastructure or operations surrounding Searles Elementary School can be seen on the conceptual improvement plan found following this memo.

### **Policy & Program Recommendations**

In addition to engineering improvements, the Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools Program has many encouragement and educational activities that can benefit students and the campus community at Searles Elementary School.

The School Site Coordinator for Searles Elementary School is Jasmine Law. The Site Coordinator can help schedule, organize, and promote many of the program offerings of Alameda County SR2S. The contact information for the Site Coordinator is below:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> 2021 Union City Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Appendix E pg. 49, <u>E Design-Standards-</u> <u>Toolkit FINAL compressed (unioncity.org)</u>

#### jlaw@alamedacountysr2s.org

Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Site Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns or if you wish to move forward with additional programming activities.

#### Programs

The following improvements are recommendations for policy and program implementation at Searles Elementary School to increase safety and active commutes to school.

- Develop and Distribute Walk and Bicycle Route Maps
  - The SR2S Program can create or revise recommended Walk and Bicycle Route Maps.
    These maps illustrate preferred routes to school for walking and biking and provide safety tips to encourage better travel behavior.
  - These maps can also be used as a part of Walking School Buses (WSBs), Bicycle Trains (BTs), or other Walk and Roll to School activities. Park and Walk, WSB, and BT meeting locations are also shown on these maps where appropriate.
- Encourage and Help Facilitate Carpooling
  - The SR2S Program can assist schools in working with caregivers to connect them with other families who live nearby to increase the number of students carpooling. This can reduce congestion by reducing the number of vehicles coming to campus.
- Encourage Caregivers to Park and Walk from Designated Locations
  - Potential park and walk locations have been identified on the Improvement Plan Map.
    - F Street, East of 14<sup>th</sup> Street
    - G Street, East of 14<sup>th</sup> Street
    - Sherman Drive, South of Colgate Drive
  - The school should encourage caregivers to utilize these locations to reduce congestion in and near existing drop-off/pick-up locations.
- Facilitate Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains
  - Walking School Buses (WSBs) and Bicycle Trains (BTs) are groups of students, led by caregiver/adult chaperone(s), that meet at designated locations and times to gather and walk and/or bike to school together. WSBs and BTs can be regular events, occurring daily, weekly, monthly, or in coordination with other events like International Walk and Roll to School Day or the Golden Sneaker Contest. SR2S staff can assist schools with the planning, coordination, and execution of the WSBs and BTs. Walking and biking in groups with caregiver supervision can increase the visibility of these road users and reduce barriers to walking or biking for some families while making it fun and exciting for the students.
- Schedule Pedestrian Rodeos and Bicycle Rodeos
  - These interactive rodeos are great educational opportunities to teach and refresh safe walking and bicycling behavior. These workshops cover many relevant topics, from understanding traffic signals and signs to bicycle hand signals to how to safely cross the

street. Pedestrian Safety Rodeos and Bicycle Safety Rodeos are geared towards elementary school students.

- Participate in International Walk and Roll to School Day (IRW2SD), the Golden Sneaker Contest (GSC), and Bike to School Day (B2SD)
  - These are the three main countywide encouragement events that occur throughout the academic year. All schools can participate in International Walk and Roll to School Day, held in October every year. The Golden Sneaker Contest, held in spring, is for elementary and middle schools and is a two-week contest both within schools and across the county challenging classrooms to travel to/from school using active and shared modes. All schools can also participate in Bike to School Day, held in tandem with Bike to Work Day, which encourages schools to sponsor Energizer Stations and students and families to bike to school.



The above items are recommendations only and based on Safe Routes to Schools site assessment best practices. Feasibility determination, final design, accessibility, funding, and implementation of any recommended improvements is the responsibility of the appropriate governing agency \*\*Red curb and/or parking restriction signage should be provided between advance stop/yield markings and the crosswalk. Exact red curb distance should be determined in accordance with the CA-MUTCD and City policies/standards. Red curb not symbolized on map. This figure is intended only for reference, conceptual planning, and informational purposes. This figure should not be used to establish boundaries, property lines, location of objects, or to provide any other information typically needed for final design, construction or any other purpose when engineered plans are required.

## Safe Routes to Schools Improvement Plan Searles Elementary

## Union City

School Safety Assessment held September, 2022

## **Improvement Detail**

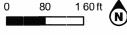
- 1a. Install a white curb with adequate signage along the southern side of Sherman Drive extending 50 feet west from the curb pull-in.
- 1b. Install Speed Limit and School Zone signs along Sherman Drive.
- 1c. Install speed humps along Sherman Drive between Colgate Drive and F Street.
- 2a. Sherman Drive Lot: Stop allowing drivers to use the cubside area along the eastern side of the parking lot as a pick up area. All students should be escorted to parked vehicles or walk along the southern path with their caregiver. Short-term:Place cones along curb, near planting strip in front of the building, on the east end of the lot. Long-term: Install bollards 5 feet from the curb.
- 3a. Install curb extensions on the eastern corners of the Colgate Drive approach to Sherman Drive.
- 4a. Install curb extensions at all three crosswalk landings at Colgate Drive and G Street.
- 5a. Install a curb extension at the southern block corner of 15th Street and Sherman Drive.
- 5b. Install cross-hatched markings along existing red curbs to further daylight the intersection.
- 5c. Install a white curb along the west side of 15th Street from F Street to the parking lot driveway between the existing red curbs.
- 5d. Install Speed Limit and School Zone signs along 15th Street.
- 5e. Install a speed humps on 15th Street between F Street and G Street contingent on a public neighborhood process.
- 5f. Install a speed humps on 15th Street between F Street and G Street contingent on a public neighborhood process.
- 6a. Place cones in front of the staff parking lot driveways on 15th Street and G Street in the parking lane. Cones should not obstruct sidewalk.
- 7a. Encourage families to use the following areas as park and walk locations: F Street east of 14th Street, G Street east of 14th Street, and Sherman Drive south of Colgate Drive.





Alameda County Transportation Commissio

The Alamedia County Safe Routes to Schools Program is a program of the Alamedia County Transportation Commission (alamediactc.org) and is funded with Alamedia County's local Measure BB sales tax, and regional, state, and federal funds.



Improvements not to scale